

## Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7078

INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL LAHORE

ZEN AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 8354

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PK

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF BHUTTO'S JULY 21-AUGUST 3

BALUCHISTAN TOUR

SUMMARY: PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONCLUDED A TWO-WEEK TOUR OF BALUCHISTAN AUGUST 3. DURING THE TRIP HE ENGAGED IN IMAGE-RAISING, PUPULIST-STYLE POLITICKING, AND PERSONALLY ATTEMPTED TO MEDIATE BETWEEN RIVAL FACTIONS IN HIS PPP. HE ALSO DECIDED TO POSTPONE THE LONG-EXPECTED RETURN TO PROVINCIAL RULE IN THE NOW CENTRALLY-CONTROLLED PROVINCE. OUR CONSULATE IN KARACHI CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO PREPARATION OF THIS CABLE. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO BEGAN

TWO-WEEK (JULY 21-AUGUST 3) VISIT TO BALUCHISTAN WITH A FAST PACE AND NEAR-REGAL STYLE THAT SET THE TONE FOR HIS ENTIRE TRIP. HE SPENT MUCH OF HIS TIME IN SOMEWHAT ISOLATED COUNTRY-SIDE CENTERS ENGAGING IN HIGHLY VISIBLE ACTIVITIES CALCULATED TO INCREASE HIS POLITICAL POPULARITY AS  
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WELL AS TO REDUCE DIVISIVENESS IN THE PPP.

2. IN WIDELY PUBLICIZED, DRAMATIC GESTURES HE ANNOUNCED THAT STATE LANDS IN SEVERAL DISTRICTS WOULD BE GIVEN TO THE TILLERS. ON JULY 22 BHUTTO ORDERED THAT PROPRIETARY RIGHTS OVER STATE-OWNED LANDS IN LASBELA BE CONFERRED ON THE TENANT-TILLERS OF THE SOIL. THREE DAYS LATE HE CONFERRED FREE OF COST THE OWNERSHIP RIGHTS OF 500,000 ACRES OF LAND IN THE PAT FEEDER CANAL REGION TO THE TRIBAL TILLERS OF THE SOIL IN PLOTS OF A MAXIMUM OF 16 ACRES EACH. TITLE TO MUCH OF THE LAND THAT BHUTTO "GAVE AWAY" DURING THIS PERIOD HAS BEEN EITHER DISPUTED BETWEEN TRIBAL TENANT-TILLER GROUPS AND THEIR SARDARI LANDLORDS, OR--LIKE THE PAT FEEDER LAND--HAD BEEN PROMISED TO OTHERS (SUCH AS HEIRS OF PAKISTAN'S WAR DEAD) WHO HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO TAKE POSSESSION BECAUSE OF OFTEN VIOLENT LOCAL RESISTANCE TO OUTSIDERS. ALTHOUGH BHUTTO DECLARED OWNERSHIP WOULD VEST IN THE TILLER, NEITHER HE NOR THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAS YET INDICATED WHAT THE LEGAL DEFINITION OF "TILLER" IS, NOR HOW DISPUTES OVER CLAIMS OF RIVAL TILLERS WILL BE SETTLED. THE JULY 26 PRESS INDICATED THAT BHUTTO HAD CONFERRED ONLY 25 DEEDS IN PERSON FOR THE PAT FEEDER LANDS BECAUSE FURTHER CHANGES IN PROCEDURE AND REGULATIONS WERE NECESSARY AT THE CENTER BEFORE THE PROCESS OF DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE COULD BE COMPLETED.

3. THE SHORT RUN EFFECT OF THE LAND DISTRIBUTION ANNOUNCEMENTS WAS AN UPSURGE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S ALREADY SUBSTANTIAL POPULARITY AMONG RURAL PAKISTANIS. HIS '70 CAMPAIGN SLOGAN INDICATED TO THE MAJORITY OF PAKISTANIS THAT THE "PEOPLES" GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO INSURE FOOD, CLOTHING, AND HOUSING TO EVERYONE. HIS RECENT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE MEANT TO SHOW THAT HE IS ALSO DETERMINED TO EFFECT BASIC SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC REFORMS, INCLUDING LAND FOR THE TILLERS OF THE SOIL. BHUTTO'S TACIT MESSAGE IN BALUCHISTAN WAS DRAMATICALLY STATED AND ENTHUSIASTICALLY WELCOMED. OUR CONSULATE IN KARACHI NOTES THAT THIS LATEST MOVE, IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ABOLITION OF THE SARDARI SYSTEM, GAINED THE PM WIDESPREAD SUPPORT THROUGHOUT

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THE PROVINCE.

4. THE LONG RUN EFFECT OF BHUTTO'S GESTURES IS THAT THEY WILL PROBABLY EXACERBATE LOCAL TENSIONS AND DISPUTES OVER PROPERTY RIGHTS. HOWEVER, THIS WILL NOT AFFECT BHUTTO'S ELECTION STRATEGY, NOR IS THE THREAT OF FUTURE DIFFICULTIES LIKELY TO CHANGE THE PRIME MINISTER'S PENCHANT FOR ADOPTING POPULAR SHORT RUN MEASURES DESPITE

THEIR POSSIBLE NEGATIVE LONG RUN CONSEQUENCES.

5. PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO CONDUCTED HIMSELF IN QUASI-MUGHAL STYLE; HE TRAVELLED FLAMBOYANTLY BY HELICOPTER AND EVERYWHERE HE WENT HE HELD PUBLIC DURBAR (AUDIENCES) IN WHICH LOCAL ELITES (TRIBAL LEADERS) MET WITH HIM AND WERE CONFRONTED WITH A PUBLIC BARRAGE OF ANTI-ELITE STATEMENTS. WHILE THIS FURTHER ENDEARED BHUTTO TO THE MASSES, IT HAS NOT INCREASED HIS POPULARITY AMONG THE TRADITIONAL LEADERS OF TRIBAL SOCIETY. IN ADDITION HE ATTEMPTED THROUGHOUT HIS TOUR TO MIX WITH THE COMMON MAN IN INFORMAL AND USUALLY UNANNOUNCED EPISODES, SUCH AS A CASUAL STROLL THROUGH A LOCAL BAZAAR OR A SURPRISE VISIT TO A TEA SHOP. HE USED EACH OPPORTUNITY TO DECLARE THAT THE ERA OF EXPLOITATION HAS ENDED IN BALUCHISTAN.

6. THE CARE AND FEEDING OF THE BALUCHISTAN PPP WAS AN IMPORTANT REASON FOR BHUTTO'S TRIP. IT WAS GENERALLY EXPECTED HE WOULD ANNOUNCE THE RESTORATION OF PROVINCIAL RULE AND EVERYWHERE DURING HIS TRIP RIVAL FACTIONS IN THE PPP VIED WITH ONE ANOTHER FOR HIS FAVOR. THE THREE LEADING CANDIDATES FOR CHIEF MINISTER--BALUCHISTAN PPP LEADER RAISANI, PROVINCIAL SPEAKER BAROZAI, AND THE PRESENT GOVERNOR, THE KHAN OF KALAT--MET WITH BHUTTO AS DID PPP LEADERS AND WORKERS THROUGHOUT THE VISIT.

7. THE PPP, IN BALUCHISTAN AS ELSEWHERE IN PAKISTAN, IS BEHOLDEN TO THE WISHES OF THE PRIME MINISTER. THIS HAS PRODUCED A SITUATION IN BALUCHISTAN IN WHICH THE PARTY HAS ATTRACTED MEMBERS OF FORMERLY OPPOSING FACTIONS AND PARTIES WHO FLOCKED TO THE PPP IN ORDER TO SHARE IN THE PATRONAGE OF THE WINNER. THE PRIME MINISTER CANNOT REWARD EVERYONE HOWEVER, AND HIS ABILITY TO IMPOSE

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DISCIPLINE ON A FACTIONALIZED PARTY WITH VARIOUS GROUPS LOYAL TO INDIVIDUAL FORMER SARDARS IS LIMITED. BHUTTO SEEMS FOR THE MOMENT TO HAVE DECIDED TO PLACE THE ISSUE OF POPULAR GOVERNMENT FOR BALUCHISTAN ON THE BACK BURNER.

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